

ASCC Wheelchair Purchasing Guidelines

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The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission (ASCC) provides a number of services to Arkansans who have sustained a spinal cord injury. One of these services is the purchase of durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs. Since there is so much diversity in the needs, availability, types and accessories for wheelchairs, the following guidelines have been developed to define the purchasing policies of ASCC.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for ASCC to purchase a wheelchair (or any other service), the individual must meet the following criteria:

1. Be reported to the ASCC and be on the ASCC Registry. Once an individual is reported, it typically takes 15-20 days for the initial assessment to be completed and a case opened.
2. The individual must meet ASCC medical criteria. This is assessed by the ASCC Case Manager with the assistance of medical personnel and reports.
3. The individual must meet ASCC financial criteria as determined by the Case Manager. There is a capability within the financial eligibility policy to allow the individual to co-purchase the wheelchair, depending upon his or her income and assets.

4. The ASCC Case Manager will evaluate all possible funding sources before approving a purchase. All other sources of funding must be exhausted before ASCC can assist with the purchase. These include sources such as, but not limited to, insurance, VA benefits, Medicare and Medicaid.

5. The individual does not have a functional wheelchair that meets his or her needs.

PRESCRIPTIONS

1. All requests for wheelchair purchases by ASCC must include a detailed prescription signed by a physician.
2. In most cases the wheelchair prescription will be developed by a Physical or Occupational Therapist who is knowledgeable about spinal cord disabilities, working in collaboration with the individual, the physician and the rehabilitation equipment specialist. This is particularly important for the purchase of the initial wheelchair.
3. In the development of the prescription, the following environmental factors should be considered:
 - Home (entrance access, doorway widths, hall turning radius),
 - Mode of transportation (car, van, public transportation),



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- Terrain (rural roads, lack of sidewalks), and
- Lifestyle (active, sedentary).

The ASCC Case Manager can assist in providing information (i.e., home evaluations) when needed.

4. The wheelchair evaluation will include justification for the model selected and describe in detail, the needs for up-charged equipment. All up-charge equipment must be evaluated for therapeutic necessity. This means that there must be a documented need (the client would be detrimentally affected without it), not just something that the client wants or the therapist or physician feels would be useful.

PURCHASE CRITERIA

1. All wheelchairs purchased by ASCC will meet the following criteria:

- Cost effective - the wheelchair will be the most cost effective model that meets the individual's functional needs.
- Durability - the wheelchair will be of maximum durability and stability in order to optimize utilization of funds. It is expected that the wheelchair should last the individual for at least five (5) years.
- Frame Warranty - all manual wheelchairs will have a lifetime warranty on the frame, all power wheelchairs or scooters will have a minimum 5-year warranty.
- Proximity of Dealers - purchases will be made only from authorized dealers who can service the warranty and provide repairs, maintenance and parts for the life of the wheelchair at a location within 200 miles of the individual's residence.

Any wheelchair not meeting the above criteria will require administrative exception.

The following types of wheelchairs will always require administrative exception:

Manual Wheelchairs

- Any wheelchair customized to the point it limits adjustability
- Any wheelchair made of high end components such as titanium, carbon fiber, etc.
- Standing wheelchairs
- Power assisted manual wheelchairs.

Power Wheelchairs

- Power wheelchairs for individuals with functional levels at or below T1
- Tilt and recline (both)
- Standing wheelchairs
- Seat elevators

ADMINISTRATIVE EXCEPTION

Any wheelchair request not meeting the ASCC wheelchair purchasing criteria will require an administrative exception.

Administrative exceptions will be made only when justification is provided to describe why the wheelchair that will meet the needs of the individual does not meet the above criteria. This justification requires an administrative approval by the ASCC Executive Director. This process usually takes about seven days.

PURCHASE EXCLUSIONS

Wheelchair accessories must be a functional requirement for daily living activities. Recreational activities are not considered functional requirements.

The following wheelchairs, options and accessories are never purchased by ASCC. A client may choose to purchase the accessory him/her self. If a client wants a specialized option or accessory on a

wheelchair purchased by ASCC and is willing to pay for it (i.e., special paint, basketball roller, backpack), the specialized option may be purchased by the client. The client will pay the vendor directly for the extra charges. The wheelchair will not be released to the client until the vendor has received payment for the extra accessories. Except for frame color, most accessories can be added on later by client purchase.

- Any wheelchair designed specifically for participation in sports
- Special Colors (if up charge)
- Sports Accessories (i.e., basketball rollers, spoke guards, high performance tires)
- Backpacks, seat pouches, light-up casters
- Headlights, off road suspension package

PURCHASING PROCEDURE

1. Since ASCC is a state agency, state purchasing policies apply to all purchases. This includes the requirement of three bids for all purchases. The ASCC Case Manager is responsible for soliciting the bids. The bid process usually takes two weeks.

2. Upon receipt of the bids, the ASCC Case Manager submits the purchase to ASCC Client Services Administrator who reviews and approves purchase; this typically takes another week.

3. When funding is available, the wheelchair is ordered and typically delivered within 6-8 weeks. Upon delivery, the individual and Case Manager evaluate the wheelchair to assure that it meets the prescription. In most cases the individual and Case Manager return to the site where the wheelchair evaluation was completed to accept delivery of wheelchair so that PT, OT, and Supplier can work together to assure proper fit and adjustment.

4. On rare occasions, a wheelchair that meets (or could be modified to meet) the prescription becomes available (through donation or return) and may be placed with the individual instead of purchasing a new one.

5. All wheelchairs purchased solely by ASCC are the property of ASCC and must be returned when the individual no longer needs the wheelchair. Individuals are asked to sign an equipment title retention agreement upon receipt of wheelchair.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Second Wheelchairs

ASCC policy permits the purchase of only one wheelchair for an individual. (That wheelchair may ultimately be replaced by ASCC). It is recognized that when an electric wheelchair is indicated for independent mobility, it is usually highly desirable for the individual to also have a manual wheelchair for transportation in otherwise inaccessible vehicles or to inaccessible locations. However, this does not justify the purchase of two chairs by the ASCC. If another payment source is available to purchase one wheelchair, ASCC may assist with purchase of a second wheelchair. If ASCC purchases the second wheelchair, it must be a manual wheelchair. Requests for exceptions to this policy require approval by the members of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission (request and justification must be submitted by ASCC Case Manager).

Replacement Wheelchairs

If an individual requests replacement of present wheelchair, there must be medical justification for the continued need for a wheelchair, as well as justification for need for replacement, such as:

- Wheelchair is worn out or no longer functional and repair is not possible or would equal or exceed the cost of replacement. An assessment by a rehabilitation equipment specialist or vendor should be done to estimate the cost of repair.
- Individual's needs have changed and the current chair is no longer usable due to weight gain, deterioration of function, etc.

APPEAL

Individuals may appeal any decision regarding a wheelchair or other purchase made by the ASCC

Case Manager. The appeal must be made by the eligible individual. Copies of the appeal policy and information regarding the steps to appeal may be obtained from the ASCC Administrative Office, any ASCC Case Manager, or the ASCC website (www.spinalcord.ar.gov).